

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

1. What is a novel coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Many of them infect animals, but some coronaviruses from animals can evolve (change) and infect humans, then spread from person-to-person. This is what happened with the current novel coronavirus. Diseases from coronaviruses in people typically cause mild to moderate illness, like the common cold. Some, like the SARS or MERS viruses, cause serious infections like pneumonia.

2. What are common symptoms of COVID-19 in humans?

Information to date shows this virus causes symptoms, such as cough, fever, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headaches, sore throat or new loss of taste or smell.

3. How does COVID-19 spread?

Like other respiratory illnesses, human coronaviruses most commonly spread from person to person through:

- Droplets produced through coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as caring for an infected person
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands

4. Can pets become sick with and spread COVID-19?

To date in the U.S. there have been a handful of reports of animals testing positive for COVID-19. There have not been reports of humans or pet owners contracting COVID-19 from their pets. At this time, there is no evidence that animals, including dogs and cats, can spread COVID-19 to humans.

5. What should I do if I have to interact with a pet who was in close contact with a person with respiratory symptoms?

Although the risk of disease transmission from the fur appears to be low at this time, shelter staff are advised to take precautions until more is known.

- Wear a gown and gloves. Face masks are not needed for healthy shelter staff and should be reserved for high-risk human interactions.
- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after each interaction with animals.
- Do not allow pets to lick your face during handling and avoid excessive interaction such as petting, cuddling, hand-feeding, and sharing food.



Key Messages:

There is no evidence that pets can spread COVID-19.

Pets can spread other diseases to people, however, so wash your hands before and after handling pets.

Animal care and control staff should follow standard protocols for handling sick animals or those exposed to disease.

Where can the public go for more information?

**Los Angeles County
Department of Public Health**
Dial 2-1-1
**California Department of
Public Health**
916-558-1784
**Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention**
800-CDC-INFO
800-232-4636

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6. What should I do if I have to retrieve the pet from a COVID-19 infected residence?

- When possible, avoid entering the home to prevent person-to-person transmission. The pet should be collected by staff while maintaining at least 6 feet of distance from people living in the home and limiting contact with the environment. Both the animal control worker and the resident handing over the animal should wear facial coverings during this brief interaction if at all possible.
- Wash hands before and after handling the pet (use soap and water or a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol). Back at the shelter, disinfect the truck, wash hands, and change your clothing.
- If collection of the pet involves interacting with people in the COVID-19 infected household or being exposed to contaminated environments, the use of PPE (mask, gloves in addition to any other PPE normally worn by staff for field work inside a home) and training in its proper use is recommended. Remove and discard or disinfect and launder (if applicable) all PPE and footwear after the animal is brought back to the shelter.

7. What should I do if the pet is impounded at the shelter?

- Wear gloves and gowns/coveralls that can be laundered and dedicated footwear when handling the pet for intake
- Wash hands between handling of each animal, after taking off gloves
- It is no longer recommended to bathe or apply topical disinfectant to these animals or pets
- Immediately disinfect surfaces in common use areas where exposed animals have contacted
- Isolate the pet in a room designated only for similarly exposed animals, away from the general population
- Post signage on the kennel identifying the pet, its exposure and “Do Not Touch”
- Take the pet outside for elimination/exercise in a dedicated area that can be sanitized but do not allow direct contact with other animals
- Monitor each animal closely for signs of illness and report to the Department of Public Health or State Public Health Veterinarian immediately if you notice signs
- Designate limited staff that have access to this room for feeding, cleaning, and medical care – to limit how much of the virus could be spread to different parts of the shelter. Clean the designated room last in relation to the entire shelter population.
- Follow shelter protocols for standard disinfection of the shelter and vehicles used to transport animals.
- Increase sanitation of areas frequently touched by people (handles, tables, leashes, containers, computers)
- Release the pet to the owner as soon as possible. If the exposed pet must be adopted or fostered out, hold it for 14 days at the shelter first.